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Implied reference to audience: on organizational rhetoric of mass media

In the first part of my paper, I am going to propose a research program which will be exemplified in the second part. This research concerns organizational mass-media rhetoric in a sense to be sketched below.

1. Implied audience

Intended addressees are the audience the writer has in mind when designing his/her discourse. Interpreters basing on the texts can only tentatively reconstruct the personal and social (i.e., linguistic) traits of the intended audience. The portrait of intended addressees need not coincide with the features of those whom the writer explicitly addresses. The philological analysis of political writings can only deal with features of implied and hypothetically ascribable addressees. When analyzing implied addressing, we analyze an author's intentions. Comparing the result with characteristics of historically known actual addressees, we may hope to obtain a deeper insight into the atmosphere of the totalitarian society. To this end, a linguistic classification of implied addressing of political discourse is in order.

Using the participial form of *imply* applied to an agent noun is not novel (see Fickert 1996, p. 137). The term *implied author* was first put forward by Booth (1961). The term *implied reader* was proposed by Wolfgang Iser, incorporating

both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process – which will vary historically from one age to another – and not to a typology of possible readers. (Iser 1978, p. xi)

In our case, the main concern of political discourse investigation is how the author expected his/her discourse to be interpreted, and if his/her expectations are justified.

An interpretive approach is especially suitable for studying political discourse, because, citing Umberto Eco (1979, p. 52), “[t]he laws governing textual interpretation are the laws of an authoritarian regime which guide the individual in his every action, prescribing the ends for him and offering him means to attain them”.

That is, readers reconstruct in a tentative way the inner world of the implied author, thus following his/her (implied) prescriptions.

On the other hand, with Culler, and continuing the conception of Roland Barthes, we can say that

To read is to participate in the play of the text, to locate zones of resistance and transparency, to isolate forms and determine their content and then to treat that content in turn as a form with its own content, to follow, in short, the interplay of surface and envelope. (Culler 1975, p. 259)

I would like to stress that mass manipulation and symbol manipulation interact in the discourse practices. Successful symbol manipulation depends upon the ability to appropriate the symbols consonant with mass perception: "These perceptions are extremely fluid, subject to fluctuations, and political success depends upon being able to strike the right chord at the right time." (Bayley 1985, p. 108).

Thus, in the days of Stalin and Brezhnev, the war metaphor predominated in Soviet political discourse; during the Perestroika era, it was superseded by the "ship" and "common home" metaphors.

In a famous book on literary criticism by Hirsch, we find the following epigraph from Northrop Frye:

It has been said of Boehme that his books are like a picnic to which the author brings the words and the reader the meanings. The remark may have been intended as a sneer at Boehme, but it is an exact description of all works of literary art without exception. (Hirsch 1967, p. 1)

Expanding this metaphor, I would say that political discourse is in this sense something like fast food: it must both impress and digest well, that is, it must persuade, therefore its author has to take into consideration real and potential addressees.

In fact, some investigators believe that

the discourse aim of a political speech is persuasive, not referential; it is decoder-oriented, not object-oriented, and consequently, the whole problem of the relation holding between words and things may be beside the point. In persuasive discourse, the speaker tries to arouse an intention, inspire belief and motivate action, not to refer to objects in the real world, and it is useless to account empirically for non-observational general terms used for this purpose. (Bayley 1985, p. 104)

I would only like to note that the reference to implied addressees is an exception to this statement.

2. Organizational rhetoric

Political discourse may be studied by a complex discipline of which political philology is only a branch itself consisting of two sub-branches, political linguistics and political literary criticism. The main concern of political philology is investigating properties of discourse having to do with political concepts, such as power, influence, persuasion, and authority, in discourse production and interpretation. Unlike political scientists, proper, political philologists consider these factors only in connection with linguistic behavior.

Properly speaking, our discipline may be called political rhetoric, because essential to rhetoric is the notion of an audience as (a) person(s) whom the speaker or writer hopes to influence (Nystrand 1982, p. 5); cf. also the classical definition: "Auditoire, en matière rhétorique: l'ensemble de ceux sur lesquels l'orateur veut influencer par son argumentation" (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca 1970, p. 25).

When talking about rhetoric, we have at least three senses: rhetoric is (1) the capacity to persuade others; (2) a practical realization of this ability; (3) an attempt at persuasion, not always successful. Political rhetoric is not confined to verbal language: there is also visual, e.g., architectural, 'rhetoric'. However, the core meaning of 'rhetoric' is the capacity to get others to do what its possessor wants, regardless of what they want, except to the extent that their desires limit what rhetoric might achieve: this, of course, is the "rhetoric of ideological manipulation and political seduction" (Wardy 1996, p. 1).

Rhetoric is the paying of attention to one's audience. Following McCloskey (1985, p. xviii) we can say: "Rhetoric is the proportioning of means to desires in speech. Rhetoric is an economics of language, the study of how scarce means are allocated to the insatiable desires of people to be heard".

This is the dividing line between political rhetoric and political science proper, because rhetoric does not deal with truth directly; rhetoric is rather the art of speaking and the study of how to persuade people.

Stalin's persuasive strategies may be called **organizational rhetoric** because Stalin spoke for a certain party, the Bolshevik party. With Cheney (1991), we can define organizational rhetoric as the way organizations 'speak' to and enlist the 'voices' of individual persons. Organizational rhetoric is the way an organization legitimizes its actions, cf.:

L'organisation légitime son action par un discours officiel, qui est à la fois un discours de motivation et un discours idéologique à vocation structurante. Il entretient une certaine représentation de la valeur, une idéologie. (Turcq 1985, p. 153)

Characteristic of organizational rhetoric are “corporate messages”:

Thus, the person (or “mask”) of the organization became reified as a personal, individual agent; the organization became in effect a natural person [...] organizational messages take on a relatively placeless, nameless, omniscient quality, even when a corporate identity is assumed and declared. That is, corporate messages tend to ‘de-center’ the self, the individual, the acting subject. (Cheney 1991, p. 5)

Something like a *Gravitation Law* may be tentatively proposed here, explaining this and other facts of this sort:

The higher the number of adherents to a party, the more attractive it is for outsiders who want to become integrated into this party as a result and become members of this mass.

The naming *Bolsheviks* of the party had no small share in framing the destinies of the Communist Party because *Bolshevik* denotes “the great bulk”.

Somewhat simplifying, we can say that totalitarian politicians tell their audience, directly or indirectly: “Be what my implied addressees must be, and you’ll be as happy and as progressive as them”.

Here are the most frequent means of achieving the aims of organization rhetoric in the days of Stalin and later on (Benn 1989, p. 85):

1. Didactic, repetitive explanation of the party's message with the aim of ensuring so far as possible that the message reaches everybody. This was by far the most important part of the Soviet propaganda method, involving as it does, stress on correctness of content and efficiency of organization.
2. ‘Active involvement’ of individuals – through giving them tasks of political or social importance – on the supposition that the fulfillment of these assignments will generate an increased sense of political commitment on the part of those concerned; and
3. The mobilization of group influence (or public opinion) against deviant attitudes or behavior.

These practices had many features in common with Fascist propaganda (see Ehlich 1989): the organizational rhetoric makes the audience exercise their reaction in a pre-programmed way in the framework of the whole organization. In the Soviet Union, compulsory political education was one of the expedients. Commonplace people felt themselves important politicians when they discussed the latest political events and the practical politics of the Soviet government. Due to such exercises, the opinions of the Communist leaders took root in the mentality of the masses. By the way, now, long after Perestroika, older people sometimes miss such organizational rhetoric very much, they typically ask in interviews: “Whom have we to believe?” This reaction is normal: after so

many years of “political exercises” aimed at delivering the “right” (politically correct) interpretation of practically all events in the world, older people lack the ability to do it themselves, without the aid of party comrades.

Under Stalin's autocracy, when almost all power rested with the ruler, political discourse itself had certain specific features. The cluster of these features may be called “totalitarian discourse”, i.e., discourse serving to maintaining the system of government where the ruling authority extends its power over all aspects of society and regulates every aspect of life. Totalitarian discourse is one of the specific political methods of socialization in the totalitarian society and serves such functions as the justification (for inward addressees) and extenuation (for outward addressees) of its political institutions. The following, for example, belong to such institutions: the secret police, the banning of the opposition, and the control of the media. As a result of persuasion, the existence of these oppressive methods seems normal to the inward addressees; the dissentients, or “dissidents”, are considered outcasts by the inward addressees, rather than normal citizens.

How the speaker envisions his/her addressees, we can infer analyzing certain types of utterances, such as Schrotta/Visotschnig (1982, p. 126f.):

- overt and concealed assertions, containing prescriptions to act in a certain manner and to take a certain attitude;
- sentences which only look like questions but in reality contain an answer; only part of them are rhetorical questions in traditional sense;
- answers to a certain number of questions; stating which questions are answered in the discourse and which remain unanswered, we can conclude what the author hoped would pass by his/her implied audience unnoticed;
- questions needing the author's cooperation with the audience in order to be answered;
- description of problems, from the perspective of the speaker and of the addressee;
- approaches to problem solution: in positive terms (*we must do this and this*) and in negative terms (*this and this is unacceptable*);
- “new” ideas, i.e. what the speaker supposes to be new to his/her audience;
- appeal to universality: what the speaker sees as a result of long deliberation, as a god's truth or as an object of investigation;
- interpellations in the parliament and to the government
- call for help and help proposal, etc.

3. Direct and indirect forms of addressing the implied addressees

In the political career of the Bolshevik speakers one can distinguish at least three stages: before, during, and after attaining power. As a consequence, the

explicit and implicit addressing of their political writings varies. Trotzky experienced all three stages, as well as Khrustchov and Gorbachev after him. However, some speakers did not have the third stage because of their natural (Lenin and Stalin) or political death (Bukharin).

On a large corpus of practically complete works of Lenin, Trotzky, and Stalin I have undertaken a statistical investigation of how they use the personal pronouns of the 1st and of the 2nd person and compared the results with fictional literature on the one hand, and with the writings of several less prominent revolutionaries on the other. Russian possesses a declension system helping to determine in what semantic role a noun is used. These data are exposed in Table 1.¹

Pronouns	Political writings					Fiction			
	Lenin	Bukharin	Stalin	Trotzky	Rykov	Tolstoy	Bely	Gorky	Chekhov
1 sg.	24.77	15.84	25.75	31.69	25.63	60.30	44.63	58.75	56.45
Nom. <i>Ja</i>	16.37	10.48	21.11	20.05	19.17	34.43	23.94	32.08	30.95
Acc./Gen. /Loc. <i>Menja</i>	1.83	1.81	1.32	3.80	1.14	8.77	0.48	10.66	8.54
Dat. <i>Mne</i>	2.98	2.24	2.04	4.42	3.25	11.19	7.46	11.31	9.92
Instr-1 <i>Mnoj</i>	0.75	0.12	0.15	0.34	0.30	0.84	1.07	0.77	0.62
Instr-2 <i>Mnoju</i>	0.69	0.19	0.20	0.67	0.47	0.54	0.74	1.11	0.40
Possess. <i>Moj...(my)</i>	2.15	1.08	0.93	2.42	1.31	4.56	6.59	3.61	6.02

¹ 1 sg. corresponds to English 'I', 'me', etc. 2 sg. corresponds to French 'toi'/'tu', German 'du', etc.; in English, 'you' is used for both 2 sg. and 2 pl. 1 pl. corresponds to the English 'we', 'us', etc. 2 pl. corresponds to French 'vous', German 'ihr' and polite 'Sie'. *Nom.*: Nominative, or agentive case. *Acc.*: Accusative, or objective case, the case of direct object; formally it coincides with the Genitive (*Gen.*) and the Locative (*Loc.*) cases of these pronouns, although there is a formal difference in other word classes of Russian. *Dat.*: Dative, or benefactive case. *Instr.*: Instrumental case. In our material, it is mostly the form of pronominal subject in passive constructions and less frequently, the case of indirect objects (like the English 'to be content with something'). There are two variants of this form: Instr-1, 'mnoj', 'tboj', is more colloquial than Instr-2, 'mnoju' ('by me'), 'tboju' ('by you'). Instr-2 sounded old-fashioned even at the beginning of the 20th century. Using the old-fashioned 'mnoju', 'tboju', the speaker wants to say: "I am old-fashioned because I am older and therefore more experienced than most of you." As we can see, such stressing of "superiority" is more typical for the writings of Trotzky and Gorky. *Poss.*: Possessive adjectival forms, corresponding to English 'my', 'your', 'our', etc.

Pronouns	Political writings					Fiction			
	Lenin	Bukharin	Stalin	Trotsky	Rykov	Tolstoy	Bely	Gorky	Chekhov
2 sg.	0.95	0.76	1.32	1.33	0.07	12.08	9.69	18.50	13.48
Nom. <i>Ty</i>	0.55	0.41	0.65	0.69	0.04	6.48	5.69	11.43	5.84
Acc./Gen. /Loc. <i>Tebja</i>	0.12	0.11	0.21	0.22	0.04	2.07	1.26	2.84	2.54
Dat. <i>Tebe</i>	0.12	0.19	0.24	0.21	0	2.21	0.67	2.77	2.58
Instr-1 <i>Toboj</i>	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0	0.37	0.44	0.57	0.44
Instr-2 <i>Toboju</i>	0	0.03	0	0.01	0	0.06	0.17	0.04	0.08
Poss. <i>Tvoj</i>	0.12	0	0.13	0.17	0	0.89	1.45	0.01	2.01
1 pl.	66.75	75.65	58.61	55.38	69.27	12.10	40.16	7.69	6.30
Nom. <i>My</i>	41.32	45.46	32.09	33.00	48.28	6.56	20.70	3.69	3.08
Acc./Gen. /Loc. <i>Nas</i>	10.92	15.63	15.12	10.58	9.72	2.53	8.79	2.01	1.90
Dat. <i>Nam</i>	8.15	7.34	7.02	7.13	6.23	2.02	7.16	1.33	0.79
Instr <i>Nami</i>	3.35	2.99	1.79	2.67	3.38	0.48	2.41	0.37	0.18
Poss. <i>Nash</i>	2.49	4.21	2.60	2.00	1.68	0.50	1.09	0.29	0.35
2 pl.	7.51	7.75	14.29	11.60	5.03	15.52	5.53	14.27	23.77
Nom. <i>Vy</i>	5.04	4.97	8.91	6.40	3.28	7.07	3.04	8.07	8.96
Acc./Gen. /Loc. <i>Vas</i>	0.83	1.13	2.02	2.07	0.37	3.57	1.15	3.04	5.35
Dat. <i>Vam</i>	1.3	1.21	2.66	2.09	0.87	3.70	0.87	2.46	6.41
Instr. <i>Vami</i>	0.19	0.38	0.46	0.63	0.37	0.66	0.34	0.46	0.83
Poss. <i>Vaš</i>	0.14	0.05	0.25	0.41	0.13	0.54	0.12	0.24	2.19
Sum total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 1: Percentage of pronominal forms in political and fictional writings before and soon after the Russian October Revolution in 1917

Fictional usage differs drastically from political usage. Lenin (1870-1924), Bukharin,² Stalin (1878-1953), Trotsky³ and Alexej Rykov (Russian Bolshevik economist, repressed in 1937) use ‘we’/‘us’ more frequently than ‘I’/‘me’.

² Nikolaj Bukharin (1888-1938) between 1918 and 1929 was the chief editor of the newspaper “Pravda”; he was also one of the founders of the Third International, “Komintern”. 1938 he was eliminated by Stalin.

³ Trotsky (1879-1940) was one of the main organizers of the Russian Revolution in 1917. Later he was expelled from the Communist Party and exiled abroad in 1927.

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910, the great Russian writer), Andrey Bely (1880-1934, Russian symbolist poet, anti-Bolshevik, returned to the Soviet Russia after emigration), Maxim Gorky,⁴ and Anton Chekhov (1860-1904, the great Russian writer) apparently prefer the 'I'/'me' forms to 'we'/'us'.

The use of 'you' (both singular, like the French 'tu', and plural, like the French 'vous'), that is 'ty' and 'vy', is rather infrequent in the "Revolutionary" usage; but the classics of Russian literature of the early 20th century vary considerably in this regard, differing both from the politicians and from each other. What is common to both groups of writers is that they most commonly use the Nominative forms of all of these pronouns; next in frequency to them is the Accusative/Genitive/Locative form of these pronouns. This may be interpreted as the predisposition of the Russian speakers to naming personal agents rather than personal benefactives and instrumentals.

Closer examination proved that the functions of 'we'/'us' in political writings differ, too. Lenin and Trotzky differ from Stalin in the number of "authorial" uses of 'we', i.e., "we" refers to the author, which is fairly infrequent in Anglo-Saxon writings, but very usual in Russian academic treatises. Lenin's and Trotzky's styles remind us, in the first stages of their political development, of academic Russian writing, where even today such use is regular, denoting a writer's modesty. 'I' (Russian 'ja') does not sound as modest as 'we' (Russian 'my') in an academic paper.

Abstracting from the statistic and semantic differences in use of case forms, as well as from relative frequency of different ways of reference to implied and to explicit addressees, let me list the following classes of use of 'we' (Russian 'my') in the political writings of Lenin, Trotzky, and Stalin.

3.1 'We' in Lenin's writings

In Lenin's writings we find following reference of 'we' (Russian 'my'):

1. 'We' refers to "Author": "Such an 'interpretation', however, is the crudest distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the bourgeoisie; in point of theory, it is based on a disregard for the most important circumstances and considerations indicated, say, in Engels' 'summary' argument **we** have just quoted in full." (Lenin 1917: *The State And Revolution*)

⁴ Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), the most prominent 'proletarian revolutionary writer', was very close to the Bolsheviks, especially to Lenin. Soon after the October Revolution he left Russia and spent several years abroad. Upon Stalin's invitation he returned to the Soviet Russia where he died.

2. 'We' refers to "Bolsheviks", for example: "It is the minutes of the Party Congress, and they alone, that show us how far **we** have really succeeded in making a clean sweep of the survivals of the old, purely circle ties and substituting for them a single great party tie." (Lenin 1904: *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Crisis In Our Party*)

3.2 'We' in Trotsky's writings

In Trotsky's writings we find the following classes of use:

1. 'We' refers to "Author": "The spirit of the Inquisition thoroughly impregnating the atmosphere of the country feeds, as **we** have already said." (Trotsky 1937: *The Stalin School of Falsification*)
2. 'We' refers to "Author + audience": "While it is true that Russia's economy, as well as Russian politics, always developed under the direct influence – or rather, the pressure – of European politics and economy, the form and depth of this influence, as **we** have seen, changed constantly." (Trotsky 1905)
3. 'We' refers to "Author + audience" meaning "Bolsheviks or Marxists": "But, even if **we** admit this purely liberal standpoint, even here our accuser will prove to be completely in the wrong." (Trotsky 1920: *Terrorism or Communism [Dictatorship versus Democracy]: A Reply to Karl Kautsky*)
4. 'We' refers to "Bolsheviks and/or Marxists", but not necessarily including the audience: "The fate of the Russian Revolution is so inseparably bound up with the fate of European Socialism, and **we** Russian Socialists stand so firmly on the ground of internationalism, that **we** cannot, **we** must not for a moment, entertain the idea of purchasing the doubtful liberation of Russia by the certain destruction of the liberty of Belgium and France, and – what is more important still – thereby inoculating the German and Austrian proletariat with the virus of imperialism." (Trotsky 1914: *The War and the International: The Bolsheviks and World Peace*)
5. 'We' refers to "Russia": "In our war against Czarism, in which **we** have never known a «national» truce, we have never looked for help from Habsburg or Hohenzollern militarism, and we are not looking for it now." (Trotsky 1914: *The War and the International: The Bolsheviks and World Peace*)

3.3 'We' in Stalin's use

Most characteristic of Stalin's use is including the implied audience in the sphere of 'we' ('my'). Thus, we find the following cases in his writings:

1. "Author + audience (= Bolsheviks)": "**We**, however, cannot live and develop in that way, comrades. The policy of a «middle» line in matters of principle is not our policy." (Stalin 1926: The Seventh Enlarged Plenum Of The E.C.C.I., November 22 - December 16, 1926)
2. "Author + audience", not necessarily Bolsheviks: "If **we** take the history of our Party from the moment of its inception in 1903 in the form of the Bolshevik group, and follow its successive stages down to our day, we can say without exaggeration that the history of our Party has been the history of a struggle of contradictions within the Party." (Stalin 1926: The Seventh Enlarged Plenum Of The E.C.C.I., November 22 - December 16, 1926)
3. 'We' refers to "Russia": "**We** terminated the war with complete victory over our enemies – this is the principal summation of the war." (Stalin 1946: Speech delivered at a meeting of voters of the Stalin Electoral District, Moscow February 9, 1946)
4. 'We' refers to "Bolsheviks and Russia": "**We** Are Building and Can Completely Build the Economic Basis of Socialism in the U.S.S.R." (Stalin 1926: The Seventh Enlarged Plenum Of The E.C.C.I., November 22 - December 16, 1926)

Stalin's prevalent reference of 'we' was: (1) the group of Bolsheviks of whom he was but one and who were "side-participants", to use the terminology of Clark/Carlson (1982); this use prevails in Stalin's reminiscences of the pre-October era; and (2) "we and you", during the Soviet era: the whole of the Soviet people, who, by definition, follow their Bolshevik leaders.

During Stalin's ministry, people thought: "Stalin is what **we** are, since he does not look to live better than we, there is no way of living better now, so let's rely on him, because he always lives up to his promises. There are so many deformations only because **he** does not know about them."

4. Conclusion

Beginning totalitarian, politicians trying to **attain** to power must learn by the example of Lenin and Trotzky. That is, if you are emulous of power and **try to attain to the power**, build a group and attract your audience by bright and extravagant behavior, terrorism included, promise as much as they can believe you are able to fulfill, etc. But do not overestimate credulity of your audience.

Unlike many others, in 1917 the Bolsheviks promised just what was most actually at that moment. People kept thinking: "They must rule us, and they'll resolve all our problems." At that stage, the pronoun 'we' is allowed not to refer to the audience, it was rather used with reference to the author himself or her-

self, or referring to the group of bright Bolsheviks whom people believed to become better rulers than the actual ones. Just like in Lenin's and in Trotsky's case.

However, if you want to **retain** the power, follow the lessons of Stalin and Brezhnev. Now, **having attained to power**, you can prolong your authority if you give the impression that you are like all of "them", i.e., the people you rule: you are just one of them, whose interests are equal to theirs, that you do not have personal interests or only minimal interest of retaining power, etc. Stalin, whose 'we' mostly referred to the audience plus the speaker, may be said to follow this linguistic tactic of retaining power. His super-ego dictated him this kind of referring.

In a way, the inclusive 'we' (meaning 'I and you') correlated with addressing people as 'comrades'. Soon after the October Revolution, the majority of Russians still used a different addressing form, 'gospodin'/'gospozha' (corresponding to 'Mr.'/'Madam', 'Monsieur'/'Madame', etc.) practically forbidden later in Soviet everyday life. 'Comrade' had a connotation of friendliness and was opposed to the less cordial 'grazhdanin' ('citizen'), used especially in addressing convicts and non-proletarian layers of society (cf. 'citoyen' in the days of the Great French Revolution). In the writings of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky, 'tovarisch' ('comrade') referred to friends, to the affinity group, the like-minded fellows. This connotation disappeared later, so that under Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the 1960s, in the 1970s and in the 1980s, 'comrade' did not sound as friendly as before.

This use of the inclusive 'we' may be characterized as aggressive in the following sense. The speaker involves the audience in his/her personal space without ever asking permission; the "perfect audience" complies with authoritarian leaders. The Russian way of using 'we' conduces this tactic to success. Because of this involvement, the audience, for instance, the common Soviet truck drivers or the kolkhoz farmers, felt themselves as prominent politicians on whom the destiny of the world depended. **Using 'we' with reference to his/her implied addressee, the author lowers the addressee's resistance to persuasion.**

Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the predecessors of the "reader criticism", wrote: "When I picture a **perfect reader**, I always picture a monster of courage and curiosity, also something supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer." (cited according to Wolfreys 2000, p. vii).

I think Lenin's, Stalin's and Trotsky's **implied readers** had to be far from being perfect in this sense. They had to be as naïve as not to see the manipulative

maneuvers in the discourse of the Soviet leaders. However, this was not always true of **real readers**, who were very often far from being the political ideal of the totalitarian society.

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